

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Year of the Lord 2019

Luke 4: Worship/Jesus/Church/Opposition-setting/Pledge

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”
“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee!”**

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³ And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’ ” ²⁴ And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of

them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away. ¹

In the Name of Jesus:

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth... ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.”

Are they a fickle bunch—swaying this way one minute, that way the next? Not...at...all! They are as consistent as a potato. For we poor sinners, whom Jesus befriends, quickly applaud what sounds pleasing and beneficial to us; but turn even more quickly against that which commits lese majeste! No inconsistency there! ‘How dare you slight who I am, where I stand, the road I’ve traveled and blah, blah, blah! I can go ANYWHERE in this town and be INSULTED! I’m here to be COMMENDED!’ (Ever been a teacher?)

My dear ones, your shepherds nightmare: what is Gospel-

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 4:16–30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

cheer and what is flattery? Where's the dividing line? Or can it be so neatly drawn?

I suppose this calls for a Dr Martin Luther, and his teaching of the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel. God speaks to us in two, distinct ways—ALMOST as if HE is two different Gods, which He AIN'T!

And when He turns the mirror into our eyes, our soul, our conscience, ALL that the old hypocrite inside us can do is BRISTLE! Yet, by going into the synagogue—AS...WAS...HIS...CUSTOM!—standing to read and sitting to teach, He, God's Son, Mary and Joseph's Boy, was simply oozing out the Good News of all the Scripture pledges summed up in Him; just Him!

There's the cross, my friends; friends of Jesus! And the main reason, I figure, that the apostles direct us to the Baptism washed over us that cannot be dried off! For we AS we, what we are, cannot only NOT STAND the complete physical exam of the Law. But at least the LAW, we get! We should be good; we do what we want; and boy, should we GET IT! Get it?! Got it!

But we don't have a tool in the drawer, a cup on the shelf, a member or talent in our corrupt nature that can grasp the Incarnation of Jesus, His Passion for us, His giving of His Body and His Blood to us still, the pledge of His Internal Spirit residing in us! We cannot even REJECT all that good stuff! For HOW can you reject what you have no power to receive in the first place?!

But He kept on; from that roller-coaster day in His hometown, to His adopted home town. Capernaum, by the way, will get theirs too! Luke 10:

¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” ²

The ‘you’—translate: ‘Y’all!’—are the men who walked with Him to acceptance to rejection to triumphal entry to arrest—then they took a couple days off. But they were truly HIS MEN! He appeared to them again, and did not treat them as they deserved! And THEY, to whom HE directs all men, all ears, tell us the same: ‘WE tell you, that THIS MAN will not treat with you according to YOUR kind speaking of Him, NOR in accordance to a rejecting you cannot help but do! Instead, He has given us, our testimony, the pledge of God’s Spirit and Heaven itself poured into you at your Baptism—and so much more!’

He grew; the Church grows. He fulfilled God’s doings in His Life; so do we, friends of Jesus. As long as what WE offer, conclude, boast about our Savior can bear His crushing and disposing and peeking underneath—because HE, moving from man’s power to the Terror He came to defeat, let nothing turn Him aside.

Your poor pastor gets truly tired of preaching. I saw a funny cartoon this week of a pastor in the pulpit, with all these different faces in the pews, each holding a different sign. One ecstatic man’s sign said ‘Tell me how much God will prosper me!’ Another furrowed brow had a sign, ‘This better be relevant today—or else!’ Exasperated face held a

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 10:13–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

placard, ‘Don’t mention hell—it makes me uneasy!’ And some alternative looking guy painted and pierced all over signed to him, ‘Please call SINS...BAD LIFE choices instead; that doesn’t sound so much my fault!’

Do I think y’all have signs under and over your faces? Sure you do! You and I are not all that different from all the other sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

The brave great one asked me a few months ago how we know that OUR God is the real God, OUR religion the true one, OUR faith pleasing to heaven versus any other. Perhaps there’s a reason for me still!

The Church of the Gospel has nothing to offer but disdain for the boasts of man and praise for the boast that Christ has conquered and risen from the dead!

The Lutheran Church, historically, has been nothing but that place where sheep hear the voice of their Good Shepherd; where they can confess what they are and they can trust what HE IS, leaving US out of the balance, the equation, the computations—and Jesus alone and Jesus only bears the weight, the solution, the judgment.

What is more WRONG about the synagogue from which the Jews drove Jesus and Paul and the early Christians. What is wrong with the Jews, over against the Christian Church? Please hear me!

N.O.T.H.I.N.G! As far as any boast WE may have under God, before God, or to parade before other men.

And THAT, great ones, is the pledge of our religion, the

Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther, the Gospel, the one true and catholic and holy and universal, saving faith! That OUR religion can not let us down, because God has pledged to us, in His Word, by His Spirit, through Jesus, that WHENEVER HE comes across with pardon and gifts and new life, whatever WE make of the Gospel won't change His mind about us one bit.

Our faith, our religion will shine forever, great ones: for it is the one faith we can have and boast that even our believing is forgiven in the Name of Jesus! Amen.